



## **POETRY OUT LOUD: NATIONAL RECITATION CONTEST FOR STUDENTS: PRACTICE CHECKLIST**

\* All judging criteria can be adjusted to accommodate students with disabilities. If an element of evaluation cannot apply to a contestant, you may remove it from the score sheet and average the applicable scores rather than add them.

### **Volume**

Project to the audience. You want to capture the attention of everyone, including the people in the back row.

### **Speed**

Perform at a natural pace. People may speak or express themselves too quickly when they are nervous, which can make a performance difficult to understand. Speak slowly, but not so slowly that the language sounds unnatural or awkward.

### **Voice Inflection**

Avoid monotone recitation. If you sound bored, you will project that boredom onto the audience. However, too much enthusiasm can make your performance seem insincere.

### **Posture and Presence**

Use good posture and be attentive. Look confident.

### **Evidence of Understanding**

Be sure you know the meaning and correct pronunciation of every word and line in your poem. If you are unsure about something, it will be apparent to the audience. Don't hesitate to ask your teacher for help.

### **Pronunciation**

Make sure you know how to pronounce or sign every word in your poem. Articulate.

### **Gestures**

Depending on the poem, gestures and some amount of movement may be appropriate and should be encouraged, as long as they are not overdone.

### **Eye Contact**

Engage your audience. Look them in the eye. If you have trouble with that, focus past them to the far wall, but try not to keep your head down.

**Level of Difficulty**

The difficulty of the poem you perform will be gauged, taking into account length, diction, and density of language. It is strongly recommended that students who compete beyond the classroom level select poems of various style, time period, and voice. That diversity of selection will offer a richer and more complete performance.

**Overall Performance**

Contest judges will evaluate the overall success of your performance.

**Accuracy**

A separate judge will mark missed or incorrect words made during the recitation. If you rely on the Prompter too much, points may be subtracted from your accuracy score. (As many as four points may be subtracted.)

**A note to students on interpretation:**

Listen to the track on the audio CD in which poet David Mason introduces Yeats' "The Lake Isle of Innisfree." In his comments, he advises you to think about how you should interpret the tone and volume and voice of your poem. Is it a quiet poem? Is it a boisterous poem? Should it be read more quickly or slowly, with a happy or mournful tone? Your interpretation will be different for each poem, and it is a crucial element of your performance.

\*\* No student will be excluded from participation in this program on the basis of race, color, religion, sex, disability, or national origin.

This information is also available at [www.poetryoutloud.org](http://www.poetryoutloud.org)